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DISCUSSION OF LAND-USE PAPERS*

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I am probably a poor person to discuss these papers, because I am so much in accord with the line of reasoning used that it is difficult to do other than add to it by further comments. I can probably contribute most by taking a few of the points mentioned by Director Corbett and Miss Luce and considering them in light of questions that have been raised by various individuals with whom I have been working in the States during the past few months. They are questions which will undoubtedly come up for further discussion in our afternoon conferences.

The main point made by Dr. Corbett and also emphasized by Miss Luce was essentially that the basis of coordination is understanding. I have sensed a growing feeling in many of the States that in our planning approach, we are violating this general principle, and by so doing are defeating our own purposes. They feel the ineffectiveness and superficiality of recommendations too hurriedly accumulated, and also the narrowness of some of the conclusions because sufficient time has not been given to developing a fuller understanding of the nature and significance of the problems.

Apparently one of the things that we as extension workers will have to do in conducting this project is to find some way of bringing into our discussions with farm people the related factual information which we have, and which these committee members want, but which must be brought into the picture in such a way as not to shut the door on their own contributions. Some feel that we can approach this best by looking upon these committees more as study groups, allowing the recommendations to come as a natural byproduct of understanding. The method used will probably be a compromise, for we have programs under way now that should have the benefit of farmer thinking even though not as complete as these farmers would like to have it. Anyway, I am glad that this point has been brought to the front early in the conference and hope it will be discussed further.

In this connection we must recognize the greater complexity of some problems than of others, and also the fact that some committees are farther advanced in their thinking than others. Consequently we should expect that the reports in any one year might vary considerably between committees, depending on the nature of problems and the point to which they had reached in their analysis. The end product over a period of years will be

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worth more if conclusions can be taken off, when they have been reached. The results from a psychological approach may be greater than those from a logical approach.

Another point made by Dr. Corbett, which I would like to enlarge on, is that usually when a farm family sits down to think about adjustments on the farm, they take a "farm management" point of view--they size up things as they relate to each other and measure their value in terms of their contribution to the business as a whole. If this is true, our planning should recognize this fundamental principle, and our approach should capitalize on it.

From the farm meetings I have attended, I have sensed a real difficulty in holding the farmers to a discussion of "land-use" problems as usually thought of. If you allow the "democratic process" to work, about the first problem that will be presented is disparity of prices, and other related problems will follow, such as high land values, heavy indebtedness, increased taxes, etc., all aftermaths of a falling price level. Coupled with these problems will be questions about competition of all kinds--competition for local markets from other areas, competition for the land in various uses other than farming, etc. In areas where forests are important, the contribution of woodland products to general welfare is of interest; and in the intensive-crop areas the farmers are conscious of their soil erosion, lack of humus, disease, and insect problems. But in general most of the items which the country as a whole is thinking about under this project have to be injected into these committee discussions in the East through leading questions. What is the significance of these farmer reactions?

Venturing for a moment my own interpretation (for purposes of discussion later) I would say that it indicates that the farm people by and large feel that the factors causing changes in the use of land in the Northeast are primarily "external," and do not originate in the land. They also feel that something can and must be done about correcting these "external" situations, for it is physically impossible to adjust to them. They know that it is possible for some individuals to overcome their environment and do better than others under the same circumstances, but that usually the income and prosperity of an area over a period of years reflects the opportunities which the resources of the area offer. Consequently I believe they would like to see a greater emphasis in planning placed on a study and analysis of the basic causal factors and less on adjustments to meet the situations that exist, which they feel in many instances are not permanent, or at least should not be considered as such.

Perhaps I can clarify what I mean by this simple personal illustration. As an undergraduate at Cornell, I entered the campus by a route that took me up a short steep hill. In the wintertime on an icy day you would often find a car half way up with the wheels spinning. One by one the fellows walking up the hill would slip over into the road and start pushing. There were about 10 of us pushing one morning without any results,

when along came a fellow who said, "Give her a chance." So he instructed about 3 fellows to stand on each running board and 4 or 5 along the back bumper. The car went up the hill in a hurry. It had the power. It simply lacked traction. The point I wish to make is not that there is a simple solution to many of our problems if we knew what it was, but the more fundamental one, which in terms of the car, was that progress up the hill evidently rested on the ability of someone to create a situation that made it possible for it to function.

Many of our farms today only need to be given an opportunity to function. To me there would seem to be a real challenge to us in guiding this planning work as to where the emphasis should be placed. We can help to build better opportunities for rural people, or we can accept conditions as they are and help them make the best of them.

Miss Luce has pointed out the contribution that the women are making in Vermont and the interest they have in planning. I have attended several of these meetings and know that the point of view and information contributed by the women greatly strengthens the conclusions. The more we get into this planning work, the more we realize the need for information from various groups.

Many of our changes in land use have resulted from the introduction of new varieties, changes in social and recreational opportunities, new methods of production, new equipment, new uses of fertilizers, insecticides, etc. We need more information about what is going to happen along these lines from the various specialists if we are to plan wisely, for we know that practically every new invention creates an adjustment problem both on the part of those who can use it and those who can't. Most of our abandoned farms in the Northeast are a result of progress in other areas, and not a result of changes on the farms abandoned.

In concluding my remarks I would like to sum them up by referring to the three general phases of this planning work, as I see it.

1. Classification of land.--In general this is being looked upon as an outlining of areas according to the major uses to which they are likely to be put. The classification should be such as to indicate the opportunities of the areas in terms of what it seems desirable to encourage. Such a classification then becomes important in studying situations, applying our facts, and developing recommendations for the use of individuals and public agencies in developing programs for the various areas. In this mapping work, Outline No. 1 from the United States Department of Agriculture suggests an approach that is workable, if adapted to meet the conditions that exist.

Because of the progress already made in land classification in many of the States, various classifications have been started. The differences are primarily in the breakdown of agricultural land. The important thing would seem to be to decide now on a system of classification which will

fit the conditions in each State and work toward a completion of these maps as rapidly as possible. They are basic to the rest of the work.

2. Land-use influences.--It is essential in many areas to come to some conclusion as to the policy to follow in regard to overcapitalization, indebtedness, taxation, price level, labor, local industries, size of farms, competition, supplemental sources of income, landlord-tenant relationships, dealer financing, erosion, lack of humus, new scientific developments, disease, and insects, before it is possible to determine the desirable uses of land. At least, we must assume something in regard to these points, wherever they seem to be important problems. Planning the use of land under conditions as unstable and complex as they are in many areas of the East can mean little unless accompanied by some plans as to what can be done about the major factors influencing the use of land. Stability in the use of land, to the extent that it may be desirable, will depend pretty largely on stability in the factors that influence the use of land.

3. Land-use policies.--In the agricultural areas what is desirable to encourage will depend pretty largely on how it affects the profits of the business, i.e., on a farm-management interpretation. From the soil standpoint, the recommendation to improve a certain hillside might be the same irrespective of the part it played in a farm business. However, if this hillside is a part of a farm which has some good valley land with it, much more can be done in improving it than if the rest of the farm is made up of about the same sort of land. Our adjustments and practices must be considered and stated in terms of a system of farming. Similarly, recommendations concerning the uses of nonagricultural land must be considered as they relate to the welfare of the various groups of people living in the area.

When looked at in this way land-use planning is simply developing a better understanding of what we have basically in land resources, and what the various factors are that constantly influence the uses to which this land can be profitably put; and based on these assumptions as to what we have, what is likely to happen to conditions, and what can be done about these conditions, deciding on the major uses for the different land areas, and how they may be better developed; and for the agricultural areas determining the systems of farming that will give the greatest profit and satisfaction to the farm family over a period of years, and recommending the adjustments and practices needed to get these desirable farm set-ups.

With these policies or statements of what ought to be done being developed jointly through the participation of the various agencies with the farm people, we will have made a real start toward a better agricultural program.